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Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 EB-08 COME-00 TRSE-00 /077 W
----------020973 052224Z /64
R 051332Z JUL 78
FM AMCONSUL KADUNA
TO AMEMBASSY LAGOS
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 4059

C O N F I D E N T I A L KADUNA 0809

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PDEV, SHUM, NI
SUBJECT: COMMUNALISM IN NORTH

REF: LAGOS 8079

1. DURING COURTESY CALL ON ALHAJI ISA KAITA, FORMER NORTHERN REGION MINISTER AND ACTIVE MEMBER OF "OLD GUARD" POLITICIANS WE DISCUSSED COMMUNAL PROBLEMS IN NORTH MENTIONED REFTEL AND PREVIOUS. KAITA BELIEVES PROBLEM HAS PEAKED AND SITUATION IS GRADUALLY RETURNING TO NORMAL.

2. IN HIS VIEW ROOT OF CURRENT PROBLEM WAS SHARIA CONTROVERSY OF LAST THREE MONTHS AND INFLAMED FEELINGS OF THOSE IN NORTH AND SOUTH. HE SPECIFICALLY CITED A PAMPHLET PUBLISHED BY A CHRISTIAN GROUP WHICH TALKED OF GETTING RID OF SHARIA AND WARNED OF ITS THREAT TO NIGERIA. THIS PAMPHLET COUPLED WITH CA PROBLEM HAD INFLAMED FEELINGS ON BOTH SIDES. HE MENTIONED THERE HAD BEEN THREATS TO BURN CHURCHES IN THE KADUNA AREA. A CROWD HAD ALSO THREATENED TO KILL THE CONGREGATION OF A CHURCH NEAR HIS HOUSE WHICH HAD LOUD ALL NIGHT SERVICES, IF THEY CONTINUED.
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3. ALTHOUGH HEIGHTENED TENSIONS EXISTED THROUGHOUT NORTH, KEY AREA IN CRISIS WAS BORNO WHERE KANURIS, WHO ARE MORE "FIERCE AND VIRILE" PEOPLE THAN OTHER NORTHERNERS OPENLY THREATENED TO KILL ALL SOUTHERNERS, MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN. HE SAID THAT THIS THREAT HAD ENCOURAGED SIGNIFICANT FLIGHT FROM THAT AREA. THE SHEHU OF

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BORNO, IMAM, POLICE COMMISSIONER AND OTHER OFFICIALS HAD ACTED TO DISCOURAGE VIOLENCE IN LATE MAY AND HE BELIEVED HAD SUCCEEDED. KAITA THINKS NEXT FEW WEEKS WILL WITNESS A RETURN OF THE FAMILIES OF SOUTHERNERS TO THE NORTH.

4. COMMENT: KAITA IS WELL-INFORMED WITH CONTACTS THROUGHOUT NORTH AND IN LAGOS. WE BELIEVE HE PROVIDED ACCURATE ASSESSMENT OF SITUATION AS HE SAW IT. WE CAN NOT AT THIS POINT EVALUATE HIS ASSESSMENT OF THE FUTURE, BUT SUSPECT IT MAY REFLECT MORE OPTIMISM THAN WARRANTED. WE ALSO NOTE THAT HE SAID THE NORTHERN CA MEMBERS ARE STILL WORKING TO REOPEN SHARIA ISSUE IN ORDER TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM; SUGGESTING ISSUE IS STILL VERY MUCH ALIVE AS FAR AS NORTHERN POLITICIANS ARE CONCERNED. IN KAITA'S WORDS, "SHARIA HAS BEEN AROUND FOR CENTURIES" AND IS NOT LIKELY TO GO AWAY.
LAKE

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